

REBEL DESTINY

782 Now she could but say that the Granman had asked her to see to this.

"It is good medicine. Do not be afraid," she added, reassuringly.

She led the way to her quarter, but before we had gone past the open shrine she stopped, and her eyes narrowed as she tried to come to a decision. From the quarter we were approaching came a crooning, moaning sound.

787 "A god speaks. The Apuku god has come to a woman this morning. Come. We will go to the G'aman's women," she said as she retraced her steps.

• 644 On a squared log in back of the enclosed shrine which
888 adjoined the council house sat the Granman's principal wife. She was a woman who in her prime must have had beauty, but, though still erect, she had deep grooves on her face, and her breasts were the breasts of an old woman. Her head was closely shorn, as was the way of women whose children were grown. Like any other woman of the village she wore only the short cloth and the bit of kerchief which showed at her waist. Like the others she went to the provision ground almost daily. She and her younger daughter, who was named Wilhelmina for the Queen of Holland, [40] cared for their field together, and now they were working side by side.

644 Wilhelmina was more robust than her mother could have been at her age. She was tall, more her father's daughter. It was she who served his food and looked after his personal needs. She was the wife of the man who had brought the boat which Sedefo had rejected, because he did not trust its spirit. As she worked, her two children were with her, [858] the elder a child of three, sitting on the ground at her feet, and the other on her back, or in her lap nursing while she did her tasks.

Unlike her older sister, Wilhelmina had little of her father's astuteness, of his quick eye, or his schooled tongue. She went about with the slow, sensuous grace of someone not quite awake, while her older sister busied herself with making the rounds of the village, observing this and that

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which went on, so that she might recount it to her father. CAA^o
The women of the village walked "softly" with this older daughter. "Daughter of the G'aman," they called her when they addressed her, and her mildly spoken, persuasive suggestions were never ignored.

Wilhelmina, however, busied herself at her work, and if anything were asked of her, she would look up with an expression of bewilderment. Differing from other women of the village, who had come to live there after marriage and knew the speech of the less aristocratic down-river settlements, Wilhelmina had never been any distance from Asindopo Lantiw. The other women were, therefore, constantly interpreting the questions which were being put to her.

She was dark of skin, as dark as her sister, but her face had a flush of red in it, as though she had brushed it with the sacred red kusu. A little above her wrists gleamed wide bands of tin. These were bracelets her husband had made for her, and they were much prized. The brass coils which she once wore had been filed through and removed, for when the ankles of a woman who bore children swelled, it became necessary to be rid of these ornaments. [142] [301] [343]

In a small mortar, decorated with carvings, she was pounding maripa nuts. The ends of the pestle were bordered with finely cut cross hatchings. [352] [312]

"Ai, we use much palm oil here," she said.

Her mother was paring cassava. At her feet were several baskets and pieces of bark, shaped like miniature canoes, into which she threw the peeled cassava. Near these containers lay a sifter, woven of palm fiber, and a grater, made of a thin board perhaps sixteen inches long and half as wide, into which long slender nails had been hammered and their points filed to a needle-like sharpness. When the tubers were peeled, Wilhelmina began the grating, first squatting down, then dropping to her knees, better to work. The grated cassava was then packed into the matapi, the cassava press which had before leaned against the house. This matapi was of a basket-like weave, golden in color. CAA^o 352 [205]

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252 and tall as the Granman's wife herself, though in circum-
ference no larger than the post of the house against which
it leaned. The woven strands were caught together in the
loops with which it was finished on top and bottom.

When it had been filled, the matapi was hung from the
stub of a stout limb, and one end of an equally stout stick
was inserted into the bottom loop, while the other rested
on the ground. Now Wilhelmina and another woman sat
down on this stick, and under the pressure exerted by their
combined weight the matapi slowly contracted. A milky
white fluid containing the poison which made the raw bitter
cassava so deadly filtered through the woven strands,
trickling into the gourd placed to receive it. Steadily the
poisonous fluid was forced out until it was not long before
the gourd was filled, and the cassava pressed dry. When
there was much work to be done, and the white woman
was not about to ask questions, the women would not
waste their time sitting on the stick, but instead would
suspend heavy stones from thongs tied to the bottom loop,
and they were then free to be about their other tasks. Now,
however, it was more amusing to sit and talk.

Whatever the method, when the meal was rid of the
poison, it was worked through the sifter into a closely woven
basket, and in that kneaded and made ready for baking
[M] on the large iron griddles. The use of the bitter cassava
they had learned from the Indians, and the names for the
sifter and the cassava press were to this day Indian, as
were their weave and shape, but the griddles came from
the white man's city.

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286 "We use Indian water jars, too. The red pottery we do
not make. But black obia pots are Negro things. These
our old women mold," said the Granman's wife.

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286 As she spun cotton for the garters she would later make,
the woman they called the Granman's younger wife sat
and talked of working the fields. Her spindle, a small iron

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and set into a base of clay, rotated steadily as she worked. Her fingers moved fast, for she did not require too fine a thread. The raw cotton, she said, she got from a wild "cotton tree." Cotton which was picked in the fields and which grew from seeds planted in the ground, she did not know at all. Was there such cotton? C44
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Working in the fields, she continued, was not too difficult. It was a woman's work. A woman did not mind it. From earliest childhood girls followed their mothers about, and learned how to work the fields. C44
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"What is hard is having to cut my own field. I have no man to cut it for me. I must cut it myself."

She paused for an instant to right her thread.

"When I plant my field, and pray to the gods to make the seed grow, then I ask the Earth Mother to help me find a way to get a man to cut my field for me. 'Earth Mother,' I say, 'help me find a man to cut my field. I have great need of a man to burn my ground.' . . ."

Seeing two women approach, she said, "Fenshonde here is like myself, she too needs a man to cut her field."

But this needed explaining. Here were two women who called the Granman "husband," and who shared the difficulty of having to clear their own fields.

It was soon made apparent, however, that both of these women were only nominally wives of the Granman. They had married into his family. When kunu, however, killed one successor to his office after the other, these women were made widows. Like the widow who now worked alone before her house which fronted the clearing, where stood the shrine to the great gods and the Granman's principal houses, they had worn tattered clothes, and a twisted kerchief as a band on their heads. For five months this had lasted, and then a dance was given. C44
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Did the white woman know about the ceremony called *pai Adyo*?

The white woman had heard the word *Dyo-dyo* from natives of the town many times. Once, indeed, a question about it put to an old woman, who it later developed was 77A

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765 And Feneke said, "Mourning is hard. The widow must not go to the river alone to wash. Other women must take her there. Her husband's spirit might seize her. Her hair must be cut. If not, he will get her by the hair. Her clothes must be ugly. She must keep herself unclean, so that his ghost will not long for her when he sees her."

But mourning was difficult not only for a woman. A man's mourning period was no less burdensome, they added. He too wore old clothes. When he went to wash, his wife's brother took him to the river. If he had another wife, he did not go into the hammock with her, for the dead woman would be envious and would kill him.

765 There were times, however, when women did not go into mourning for their husbands. If a woman carried a child in her womb, then she did not put on mourning clothes at all. She did not weep, she was not allowed to show any grief. That same night the dead man's oldest living brother would come with her in the hammock. If there were no brother, another man would come, for some man had to come.

"He must come. It cannot be otherwise. She cannot go to her hammock alone. So it is every night when a woman carries a child in her womb. A man must be with her, for the sake of the child."

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243 In the clearing the widow stood stamping rice. About her the rice hulls flew and made a half circle of gold at her dark feet. Her mortar, which was made of a hollowed-out log, like a drum, was large and reached almost to her hips. On the ground was a large tray which she used for winnowing the rice. With slow, regular beats she lifted and dropped the pestle, and as her body swung with its slow motion the head of the sleeping child on her back rolled this way and that.

768 Her two small boys had gone to live in her mother's village, but this girl child remained with her. She was born

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more than a year before her father's death and therefore had not saved her mother from mourning.

"My sons are big so," she showed, pointing to the mortar, "and already my brother takes them with him down the river, and when they are with him he tells them about the creeks and the trees, and where the villages are which are friendly to our people. But when they come here to see me, then they play. They have play guns and play arrows which they make themselves. Into the uncleared bush they shoot them until I call them away to eat. Here I have no man from whom they can learn. Here they only play."

But boys liked to be with men. When the rains came, her brother would let them sit by when he carved, and, seeing him work, they would take up a knife and begin whittling. That was how boys learned to do men's work.

Women children played with "gossi." She put down her pebble, and felt about in her cloth where the child slept, and brought out a gourd, resembling in size a small cucumber. It had beads on top for eyes and a few deft cuts to indicate nose and mouth, while above the eyes was crosshatching for the hair. Until girls were old enough to be of use in the fields, they sat about in the clearing playing with these dolls.

"When they are four and five, then they like to work."

There was, of course, dancing. All dances were opened by the children, and at six and seven the girls knew seketi and awasa, and bandamba, and the boys danced oza.

"Do you dance oza?" we asked the Granman's five-year-old grandson, who was standing with us beside the widow.

"Ai," he said, but once our attention was turned to him he said also, "White man, the children say you carry money in this." He touched a water canteen which hung from the stranger's belt. "I know it is water."

He knew also that shaving cream was soap, and not white people's sacred clay, and now as women came with bottles for the white man's obia water—a name they gave

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609 to all the medicine we had for them—he took it upon himself to instruct them to wash the bottles carefully, so he followed us to the storeroom, and to warn them that what was given was not to be taken internally.

"*A tati, a tati-o, u' no ma' de-o*—He says, he is saying, you must not drink this," he explained, with something of his mother's persuasiveness in giving instructions.

His grandmother had said one day half in jest that he would have a tiger spirit which would need to be reckoned with when he grew to manhood. He was a straight-limbed, wiry child, not troubled with the umbilical hernia so often met with in children here in the bush, or with the distended "cassava belly."

[14] The coming of the strangers had eclipsed all desire for familiar diversions here. From early morning the children of the village stood about watching us, so that the brushing of teeth and the lacing of boots were carried on under excited supervision which continued day after day. But to this small grandson of Yankoso we were visitors in his quarter, and whether we were alone in the council house or were in the small house reserved for privacy, he would find his way there and stand about asking questions.

[15] Sometimes, however, when he found us at work and saw that we did not wish to be interrupted, he would lean against the wall for a long time watching us in silence, until presently he would come to life, as it were, walk over to the table, and begin beating the Kromanti rhythm on it.

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868 But he was not the only child who knew the drum rhythms. In the last village in the Pikien Rio, we met a two-year-old child who came to us with more than usual readiness and followed us about, his hand in ours until we came to his mother's house, where he left us to sit down on a wooden plank which lay near it. We had been in conversation with the older people and did not notice his going, until all at once we heard the slow beating of the rhythm to the Sky God. It was this child of two, drumming against the plank on which he sat.

THE ARTIST OF MA'LOBBI

us when we asked him. At one landing place where we stopped for a moment, we could hear the drums sounding the rhythm to the river gods, but the drumming stopped abruptly as word went back along the path that white people had come. Men streaked with pemba came down to the river to look at the Bakra who had visited the village of their Granman. 123
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In the boat, we missed Bayo. The grandson of the Granman, who was our bow paddler, we had met but casually before we had started. There had been none of the chances for conversation that had made of Bayo a friend before he and his great-grandfather came to take us to the country of the Granman. Later we would come to know this youth for a pleasant young man, capable and quiet, who was proud to show his ability, and quick to resent the suggestions of our town man in such matters as making a shelter for the night. 644
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"We are children of the bush!" the young man exclaimed sharply. "We know how to make this." And such a good shelter did the paddlers build that men of a near-by village, who passed, stopped and asked that it not be torn down the next morning, as had to be done with shelters erected for the night on the land of a strange clan, but that we should let it stand so that others might use it. [AR5]

When we asked him questions, however, or made observations on people who passed by in their canoes, he gave us noncommittal replies. Mataibo, the captain of our boat, was even more reserved, though he liked to twit our town man, and in an unofficial capacity would have been amusing. Conversation between the two paddlers, or between them and the two young men who were entrusted with our other boat, was in the clipped, rapid "deep-Saramacca" speech which, in spite of our use of it in conversation at the Granman's village, we still found it difficult to follow when Bush Negroes spoke informally to one another. [157]

As the day wore on, we began to get used to the rapidity with which village after village was passed. Here was the landing place of the one where we had stopped so that 48A

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643 That happened especially to people who, summoned to work
687 in the grand man's clearings, carried out their task with ill will.

About 1950, M..., of Papaïstou village, had openly revolted against the grand man whom he had refused to conduct to Saint-Laurent. The grand man sentenced him to make a large stairway of planks, from the Boniville wharf to the entrance to the village, giving him an injunction to leave the country if he refused. M... ended by yielding and executed the large stairway which can now be seen at the Boniville wharf.

643 The grand man is constantly concerned about his prestige
648 and dignity; he is almost always dressed in the European manner
292 and in ceremonies wears an impeccable white uniform; the French
177 administration gives him a relatively large salary and, when he comes to Cayenne, he is put up in the hospital in the apartments reserved for officers.

643 To greet the grand man one does not look directly at him
572 but places himself in profile with respect to him.

644 The grand man has no servants (that would be contrary to
357 the morality of the Refugee Blacks) and leads a very simple life.
466 Still, he does not do any hard manual labor; each year he calls together a certain number of men from each lo to work in his clearings; he does not pay them, for this work is an obligation provided for by custom, but he feeds them heartily.

643 Likewise, for his traveling, he requisitions by turns as boat-
466 men two or three of his subjects. Sometimes also he requisitions women to help his wife at harvest time.

On the other hand, for all other work he may need (such as the construction of a large boat) he has to pay like everyone else and he is not given any reduction.

/73 cont. /

643 The present grand man, contrary to his predecessors, has
644 only one wife. She is dressed like the other women and works
586 at her clearing like everyone else, /74/ but her marriage to the
grand man imposes special obligations on her: she can not divorce
him; neither can he repudiate her.

643 The attitude of the Boni toward the grand man is a curious
829 mixture of respect and disparagement. They regard him as the
living symbol of their nation, and each one resents as if it were a
personal insult an outsider having an incorrect attitude toward him.
But their undisciplined spirit kicks up at the measures he is obliged
to take to make them respect customary law, and even the
authority of a poised and benevolent man like Grand Man Difu is
not willingly accepted. As a matter of fact, the Boni stand for
the authority of the grand man as they adhere to the worship of
their gods, by the feeling of an absolute and inexorable necessity;
in their minds the grand man is above all the priest of Odun; if the
grand man were not there, they would be without defense against
the wisiman, without recourse against the vengeance exercised by
the yarka of the dead of other lineages.

622 The political power of the grand man is entirely based on
these beliefs, and if they were to collapse, he would disappear
with them. Nobody would submit to any other law than that of
the lineage, founded upon fear of the ancestors.

692 The lanti kuutu. This is the assembly of the men, without dis-
693 tinction of age (1) or kinship; this council (lanti = law) constitutes

1. There is no precise rule for
fixing the age from which an
adolescent may sit in this council.
It is apparently when he has
reached full physical development
and earns his living by his own
efforts, about 18 to 20 years,
he does not have to be married.

the legal apparatus of the Boni.